

War Scandals

By CAMERONIAN
of 'REYNOLDS'

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
(I) BLUE NIGHT, RED DAWN	1
(II) TEACHING THE RABBLE HOW TO BABBLE ..	2
Falsehood in War Time—The Great Recruiting Ramp—Britain's War Aims—How They Were Realised	
(III) GUNS FOR HEROES	8
The Shell Shortage Scandal—Corruption of the Arms Ring	
(IV) SPIKING GUNS FOR HEROES	12
Treason in High Places—How British Big Business Traded with the Enemy—War Prolonged for Two Years	
(V) CONGENITAL IDIOTS ENTER PARADISE ..	17
Profiteering—Who Got the Money—Swindling the Nation	
(VI) THE WAR THE GENERALS PREPARED FOR ..	22
Britain's Blundering Brass Hats—Revealing Military Secrets to the Germans—Why the Army of To-day's all Wrong	
(VII) RECREATION FOR TIRED WARRIORS	27
War's Trail of Vice—Morals Among the High Command	
(VIII) PREPARING SCANDALS FOR THE NEXT WAR	31
The Sedition Bill—Interference with News—How Press Censorship Works—Jerrymandering the Arms Commission—Fascism in the Making	
(IX) THE WAY TO PEACE	35

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CHAPTER I

BLUE NIGHT, RED DAWN

High noon, August 2nd, 1914. Mr. and Mrs. Britain sit down to a Sunday dinner that promises to be as dull and uneventful as every one of the six hundred Sunday dinners preceding it since Imperial England annexed Transvaal and the Orange Free State. True, the dessert provided by the Sunday papers as an aid to British digestion is more spicy than usual. There are salty stories from the Divorce Courts. There is lots of pepper in the activities of Irish advocates of Home Rule, women agitators for the Suffrage, and, of course, those Labour fellows. And there is blood—and rich promise of more blood.

Thirty-five days before a mad Serb in Serajevo fired a bullet at Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. The bullet did more than shatter a Royal heart. It exploded a series of ammunition dumps now threatening to blow up half Europe. It was followed by an Austrian declaration of war on Serbia. Russia's rush to succour the Slav brought Germany into the diplomatic wrangle. The Kaiser declared war on the Bear and, noting that France was mobilising, included the Lady of Fashion in his invitation to the death waltz.

Happy Mr. and Mrs. Britain, with trouble enough in the family to keep them lively, and without neighbours likely to run amok at any moment!

By July 27th the British Government had issued a General Mobilisation Order. British armies were on the march, British ships were priming their guns. Of this Mr. and Mrs. Britain were blissfully unaware—they do not know it even now!—for already Britain's free Press was co-operating, gladly and in the national interest, with the kid-glove censorship which always operates when a British Government is brewing a hell's broth.

True, although operating the censorship, Conservative newspapers were hinting darkly at British obligations, at the everlasting truth that Britain's word is its bond, at the menace to British economic interests implicit in the Kaiser's ambitions for Colonial expansion. But Liberal newspapers, mouthpieces of the Government, were crying "Keep Out." War was no affair of ours, they said. Our business was to salve our Nonconformist conscience by arming all fronts, feeding all populations, and fattening British bank books.

So Mr. and Mrs. Britain remained serene. Had not Mr. Horatio Bottomley placarded the country with a bill designed to

calm all fears and promote the sale of his scandal sheet ? It read :

“To Hell
with
Serbia.”

Yes, thought Mr. and Mr. Britain on that quiet noon-day, Europe is a long, long way from Tipperary.

Before the sun went down, the shrill cries of newsboys brought the populace on to the streets of Britain's cities. The Government was demanding guarantees that Germany would not violate the neutrality of Belgium; guarantees which, on the evidence of events, could not be given. Europe loomed nearer than Tipperary. Two days later, Great Britain was at war !

CHAPTER II

TEACHING THE RABBLE HOW TO BABBLE

Unity is the first need of a nation at war. If men act together because they think in unison, so much the better; but act in unison they must, even if hate directs their passions, driving them, mob-like, to fight the foe abroad and to extirpate the voice of protest and hesitancy at home.

In August, 1914, unity of thought was not to be expected among political leaders trapped by Secret Diplomacy into a conflict they neither wanted nor understood. Viscount Morley and Mr. John Burns left the Cabinet on principle. “Lloyd George, Harcourt, Simon and Beauchamp,” wrote Lord Haldane in *An Autobiography*, “at first professed themselves to be irreconcilable,” although on no principle that was “easy to discover.” Neither was unity of thought to be expected from a semi-illiterate electorate, in whose brain the light of learning was fed by a sensational Press. That same Press, however, was quick to perform its patriotic duty, to prove that the heart and instincts of the great British Public were sound. For unity in thought, it produced the readiest and most reliable of substitutes, unity in hate. On August 6th the *Evening News*, which only a few months before described the Kaiser as “a very gallant gentleman, whose word is better than many another's bond,”⁽¹⁾ denounced William II as “the Mad Dog of Europe.” The hymns of hate grew in number and swelled in volume, reaching a climax in August, 1915, when the *Daily Mirror*, in newspaper parlance, scored a “scoop.” It told in the caption of a picture and with a marvellous economy of words the story of how German Uhlans had raided a Warsaw church, stealing some sacred ornaments. The picture showed three German soldiers laden with the spoils of desecration. The fact that the picture was of Cup-winners parading the trophy of a cavalry display held two months before the War broke out did not disturb the conscience of the British Press. The picture helped to awaken the conscience of the British people, to inform a still incredulous public of the need and nature of God's work.

Already the savants and soothsayers had identified with Satan the same Kaiser William of whom Lord Grey (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) was to write: "If matters had rested with him (the Kaiser) there would have been no European war arising out of the Austrian-Serbian dispute." The "number" of the Beast of Apocalypse, as foreseen by St. John, is 666. The word Kaiser has six letters. Write these letters one beneath the other, adding the mystic figure 6 to the number of the place occupied by the letter in the alphabet, and note the result:

K	..	..	..	116
A	..	..	..	16
I	..	..	..	96
S	..	..	..	196
E	..	..	..	56
R	..	..	..	186
				<hr/>
Kaiser	..	..		666
				<hr/>

H
I
I
L
E
R

116
16
96
196
56
186
 666
 756

Here, indeed, was revelation !

By September 16th, 1914, the first atrocity story was going the rounds. A Nurse Hume had seen German soldiers burn a hospital at Vilvorde. The Huns violated her. They cut off her breasts. In dying she wrote down the details of her suffering, wrote them, literally, in letters of blood, and sent them to a sister, who found for them an obscure home in the columns of the *Dumfries Standard*. From the lowlands of Scotland the story travelled to London. It received notice in *The Times*. The official Press Bureau refused either to accept responsibility for the correctness of the statement or to object to its publication.

On December 30th, Kate Hume, sister of the violated nurse, appeared in Dumfries High Court, and was found to have fabricated the story and forged the letter. She was unlucky. The Press Peer who invented the Uhlan desecration was invited to join the War Cabinet.

To Kate Hume, however, as to all Press Peers, belongs an historic honour which neither imprisonment nor death can destroy. They provided the blood-stained embroidery for thrilling tales of the genius and bravery of the leaders of the British Expeditionary Force in France. They helped to send, in August and September, 1914, no less than 761,824 men into the Army. They paved the way for the great recruiting ramp.

Before long the Liberal Parliament became sound on war. Apart from a handful of "pro-Huns," led by Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald, and a few pacifists on the Government benches, Members were content to accept whatever the Prime Minister told them and to sit tight "during the duration." The Press was sound on war; was teaching "the rabble how to babble." Already the prospect of a war trade boom was swelling its advertisement revenue,

to say nothing of the effect of war news on its circulation. The Pulpit recognised its duty clearly enough, although French priests were making the uncomfortable claim that this war "was a war of Catholic France against Protestant Germany."⁽²⁾ The Church in England could escape from harsh reality by blessing "a holy war." And it did. The one thing required to stir the civil population, which in October, 1914, yielded only 136,811 recruits ⁽³⁾ was an effective platform campaign. The moment brought forth the man—and the women !

Mr. Horatio Bottomley laid aside the muckrake and lifted up the Cross. His literary pronouncement "To Hell with Serbia" was revealed as the last wild cry of an atheistic mind engaged in a death-struggle with God. God had conquered, had entered into possession of the Bottomley heart. Henceforth the mission of God's (and Lord Northcliffe's) new Viceroy was to send men to the mud and slaughter of Flanders.

Great municipalities competed for Mr. Bottomley's services. Those towns which secured them then competed for one of his three great speeches. Speech Number One was the appeal direct. It cost one hundred guineas, plus expenses, to deliver. Speech Number Two reinforced the appeal direct with a purple passage about the Prince of Wales. It cost five hundred guineas, plus more expenses. Speech Number Three invoked God. It cost one thousand guineas, plus still more expenses.⁽⁴⁾ Hell knew no fury like a non-combatant. The Mayors plumped for Speech Number Three. Did not a town's contribution to Britain's man power determine its return in knight-hoods, J.P.ships, and O.B.E.s ? The cash would be paid by the ratepayers, the honours purified by the blood of the ratepayers' sons.

Trade Union leaders, too eager when Capitalism enters crisis to rescue the system by which they live, rallied rapidly to the Cause. The Socialist International crashed, breaking the heart of J. Keir Hardie and hastening his death in September, 1915, the sturdy Britains being among its willing killers. They added silver tongues and the language of the proletariat to propaganda for mass murder.

With the highest ideals of the Votes for Women movement animating her, Mrs. Pankhurst dropped suffrage militancy for national militancy.

Mrs. Pankhurst, alas, was incapable of the larger patriotism, the vital appeal, the sex appeal. That was the privilege of publicity-seeking actresses. They appeared on hundreds of platforms offering kisses from carmined lips to every raw recruit, opening their bosoms to every sex-tortured adolescent willing to exchange civilian clothes and safety for a cuddle and Khaki. So began the Campaign of the White Feather.

It is characteristic of primitive races, even of the Danakils of Abyssinia to-day, that the women refuse marriage to men who cannot lay at their feet Phallic evidence of the conquest of three.

four or five warriors. That, of course, is the normal instinct of woman everywhere, whether she be from Danakil or Mayfair. She asks from her mate the security which society fails to ensure her. To the most brutal black men go the hearts of the dusky queens. To the richest white sheiks go the favours of the most desirable women.

The difference between Eve Black and Eve White in August, 1914, was that Eve White was staking a claim to emancipation, was preaching her preference to stand with man in the market-place as a beast of burden. Now she reverted, enthusiastically, to her historic rôle of beast of pleasure. The money in a man's pocket, the jingle of security, no longer attracted her. His eligibility depended on the colour of the trousers draping his legs. To the domination of khaki, Woman, even Gentlewoman, gave a glad subjection. In the elegant "agony" column of *The Times* there appeared in July, 1915, this message: "Jack F. G. If you are not in khaki by the 20th I shall cut you dead. Ethel M." To the slinking coward still mean enough to think for himself, to doubt the word of politicians, parsons, and Press Peers, Woman presented the White Feather.

The result of thousands of recruiting meetings was terrific. By the end of September, 1915, 1,414,655 volunteers had flocked to the Colours—had bid wives and sweethearts "good-bye till Christmas." Measured by the demand for cannon fodder, however, this recruiting ramp failed. Its cost in cash was colossal. Its cost in corruption was colossal. Its cost in destruction of the intellectual and moral integrity of the private citizen was colossal. Yet it produced less than one-third of the army Great Britain was destined to force into the field of battle.

Hundreds of thousands of these recruits were magnificent men, idealists responding to the call of duty. Hundreds of thousands were men ready to exchange the horrors of sweated industry and low wages for the King's shilling, separation allowances, and adventure. By February, 1915, for example, 28,413 Scottish miners (21.4 per cent. of the total)⁽⁵⁾ had left the old men and imported wage-breaking Lithuanians and Irishmen in possession of their pits and filthy miners' rows—and had left the Authorities with so grave a problem of raising coal that their recruitment had to be controlled. Many thousands were men anxious to escape nagging wives, men stunned by the cuddles of over-ripe actresses, or snared by the allurements of unripened damozels.

Within a few months, although age limits were extended and physical standards were reduced to give gentle boys and their blood-thirsty grandfathers a chance to serve, the voluntary system was a confessed failure. Lord Derby produced a scheme to enable war-glad civilians to "attest" their patriotism. Only 1,150,000 out of 2,171,000 single men responded. Married men, especially those who were in "starred" occupations or were suffering from disease,

attested more vigorously—to the number of 1,679,000. So the country greeted 1916 as a nation of conscripts, a nation bludgeoned into war service by local Military Tribunals.

There is voluminous evidence of the stratagems employed by men called before Military Tribunals to escape service, and of the treacheries of the city councillors who prevented their escape. The reader will forgive me if I quote only a few of the more entertaining accounts of these proceedings.

All Tribunal chairmen posed one stock question to the 16,000 conscientious objectors and others who appeared before them: "What would you do if a German raped your sister?" To that question there was only one answer, the patriotic answer: "I would go and rape his sister." And, of course, that answer was no excuse for exemption.

There was the notorious Glasgow chairman who evaded the recommendation to give special consideration to the owner of a "one-man business" by asking "Are you a butcher?" When the answer was "Yes," there followed the remark: "The very man they want in France"—and a calling-up notice. There is the fame won by a Fleet Street journalist who, on a story telling how deafness was rejected as an excuse at a London Tribunal, wrote the heading: "'Ear, Trumpeter, what are you sounding now?" And there was the classic appearance before the Aberdeen Military Tribunal of a local worthy, Fraser Mac, a Socialist with strong objections to fighting "a Capitalist War."⁽⁶⁾

"What would you do if a German assaulted your mother?" asked the Chairman. "Lay him oot," replied Mac, "as I would lay you oot if you tried it." Then Mac thrust home his advantage. He had discovered that the business-house of the Chairman had secured exemption for all its travellers. "I think I am as much entitled to exemption as the travellers, of whom I have definite information, of the firm of —," he bawled. "We can't have that," spluttered the Chairman. Fraser Mac persisted. The Chairman shouted him down with the words: "You would be no use in the Army anyway. You would be a confounded nuisance. You are exempt!"

Slowly, painfully, Great Britain dragooned two million men into khaki. As Christmas followed Christmas, their flagging spirits and dying hopes, and the spirits and hopes of the civil population at home, were revived by tendentious tales of victory, by more ruthless affirmations of Germany's war guilt, and by the stampeding of America into the War on the Allies' side—a revulsion, the now sceptical British public was told, of civilised opinion against the sinking of the "Lusitania" on May 7th, 1915,⁽⁷⁾ the real truth being suppressed until June 24th, 1917, when Mr. Bonar Law told the House of Commons that "we had spent so freely of our resources that those available in America had become nearly exhausted when our great Ally entered the struggle." America was

stampeded into the war to save financiers whom the threat of British insolvency would have ruined—a deduction which the evidence of Mr. J. P. Morgan (who received £6,000,000 as commission on the sale of war materials to Great Britain and France) before the Munitions Committee of the American Senate on January 6th, 1936, did nothing to invalidate.

More particularly, the Government maintained national morale by developing the art of identifying the war aims of the Government with the interests of every sect and faction in the community. Within a few days of the outbreak of War, indeed, the British Government were perfecting this latest technique of propaganda, were ensuring that men of pure mind could kill with clean hands. Sir William Robertson Nichol, editor of the *British Weekly* and torch-bearer of Christianity in the councils of the Liberal Cabinet, turned an honest penny at the expense of the National Debt by setting out Britain's war aims thus:

“It is a war that was none of our making . . . the contention was forced upon us.”

“We went forth in the cause of the smaller nations, and especially in the cause of Belgium, which has kept troth with us so bravely.”

“We entered the war because it increasingly appeared it was a war against barbarism, a war for freedom, civilisation, and Christianity.”

“If we are subjugated by Germany, we have no higher future before us than the life of tributary province.”

“This is a war for the people.”

“When the war is over and peace arrives the world will enter on a day bright with promise for those who are to follow us.”

The Great War, like every war before it, was to be war to end war. Britain, declared Prime Minister Asquith in October, 1914, had no desire to add to its Imperial burdens either in area or in responsibility. We were not fighting, according to Mr. David Lloyd George in February, 1917, “a war of conquest.” Our aims, as Mr. George had stated them in an effort to suppress the shock given to idealism by the Bolshevik publication of the Secret Treaties of 1915, under which the Allies had carved up the world among themselves “as the fruits of victory,” was to make the world safe for Democracy, build homes for heroes, and—later—hang the Kaiser.

To realise these aims, nearly 5,000,000 men bore arms in the British Army, nearly 2,000,000 Britons suffered wounds and disablement, nearly 575,000 Britons passed into undying Death. The aims were translated into hard fact by the Peace Treaty.

The hard fact was that Great Britain added 1,415,929 square miles of territory to her Imperial burden, and to her opportunities for Imperialist investment and exploitation.

CHAPTER III

GUNS FOR HEROES

Three hundred years ago philosophy pronounced a benediction over Mars. Hugo Grotius, first student of international jurisprudence, when exploring some aspects "Of the Laws of War and Peace," developed the thesis that the defence industry of every country must be independent of every other country. A Great Myth, and a pleasant one, offering comfort to many classes of men indulging in the secret vice of Mars worship.

It sustained politicians and diplomats adjusting balances of power and seeking sanctions for the fallacy that every nation's security required that it should be stronger than every other nation. It also provided a philosophic background for technical progress in the making of arms.

These, having become propulsive with the invention of fire-arms, had established the superiority of the machine over human muscle. Thus there had been opened up the charming prospect of a British David, enjoying access to the raw materials of machinery and chemicals, always striking effectively at the brow of a backward Black Goliath, denied God's grace in terms of iron, and steel, and coal.

The Great Myth, moreover, identified preparation for slaughter with patriotism. It gave investment in arms an ethical content. It permitted priests, parsons and Cabinet Ministers to hand their personal savings over to the Cannon Kings with the assurance that while patriotism purchased passports into heaven their investments would yield interest sufficient for happiness on earth.

Greatest of all the achievements of the Great Myth, however, was the excuse it offered for the Great Convention; the Convention that high profits for Cannon Kings meant high patriotism.

From Germany where, just before the War, Social Democracy was insisting that Big Business should have glass pockets, came interesting revelations of the results of the Great Convention. Karl Liebknecht and his colleagues forced an enquiry, some of the secrets of which Deputy Erzberger made public in the Reichstag on April 23rd, 1913. ⁽⁸⁾ The Ministry of Marine, he averred, could buy armour plate at half the price it was paying without contravening the armament makers' right to receive a large, clear profit. Other statements were that machine guns which could be made in State workshops for £50 were charged £250, and that the oft-replaced machine gun barrel for which the State paid £2 10s. could be produced for less than 19s.

Before the Austrian Parliament, according to Ludwig Pfeiffer, ⁽⁹⁾ there was laid information that field tube guns costing £380 would have returned profits amounting to 25 per cent. had they been charged at £150. The price of 50,000 tons of raw iron used for rails and tools was £2,000,000. The price of 50,000 tons of raw iron used for armour plate, guns and bombs was £8,000,000.

This, of course, was not prime evidence in relation to the cost

of killing in Great Britain. So the British Press ignored it. They also ignored the figures obtained by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P., in 1905, showing that a rifle made in the Sparkbrook (Birmingham) Government Factory cost £3 4s. 2½d. against the Birmingham Small Arms Company charge of £4 3s. 9d. Nor did the British Press break silence when in 1907 a Government Factories and Workshops' Committee reported that a State-made 18-pounder gun carriage cost £343 against the private Cannon Kings' charge of £672, and admitted: "experience shows that where the Government is not in a position to manufacture full advantage will be taken of its necessity,"

but recommended that the Sparkbrook Factory be sold—as it was, to B.S.A.! ⁽¹⁰⁾ With the Press as a buffer between the public and the armamenters, the Great Myth and the Great Convention survived other shocks, survived them triumphantly.

There was, for example, the oft-exposed big Navy scare of 1909. Mr. H. H. Mulliner, at all material times managing director of the Coventry Ordnance Company, informed the Admiralty in 1906 that the German Navy was being increased enormously. Panic gripped members of both Houses of Parliament—especially those, and they were numerous, who held shares in the Armament Trust. When the Navy Estimates of 1908 provided for four new battleships, the Press gave voice to its masters' fear of the German menace. A by-election at Croydon was won for the Conservative Party by Sir R. Herman Hodge (now Lord Wyfold) to the lyrical strains of:

"We want Eight
We won't wait
'Odge, 'Odge, 'Odge!"

The Liberal Cabinet interviewed Mr. Mulliner almost three years to the day after his first paper bullets were fired. It decided to enter the World Arms Marathon Race. It raised the Estimates by £2,823,200, the price of four more battleships (or eight in all), and placed a contract with Cammell Laird and Company, a joint owner of the Coventry Ordnance Company.

Mr. Mulliner's own version of the incident—that the Liberal Cabinet charged him with scare-mongering, threatened his company with a withdrawal of orders and so forced him to sell his shares—does not square with the available evidence. The Cannon Kings got their eight ships. There is no proof that Germany was engaging in enormous naval expansion. ⁽¹¹⁾ Mr. Mulliner was displaced by Rear Admiral R. H. S. Bacon, C.V.O., D.S.O., Naval Assistant to the First Sea Lord and former Director of Naval Ordnance and Torpedoes.

In the House of Commons on March 18th, 1914, Mr. (now Viscount) Snowden delivered a speech which challenged the Great Myth by proving that British Cannon Kings did not keep Britain's defence industry independent of all other countries, and put a new and exciting construction on the interesting habit of recruiting the staffs of the Armament Trust from the personnel of Government

Departments. Mr. Snowden quoted from the September, 1913, issue of *Armaments and Explosives*, a journal devoted to the interests of the industry, in which there appeared these words:

“Contractors naturally are very keen to avail themselves of the services of prominent officers who have been associated with work in which the contractors are interested . . . they know the ropes . . . kissing undoubtedly goes by favour, and . . . the result is good.”

Mr. Snowden also referred to the “We Want Eight” Scare of 1909: “The whole of the extra work was given out to contractors instead of to Government dockyards. The result has been the profits of Vickers have risen from £474,000 to £872,000 and are still rising. Armstrong’s profits have risen from £429,000 to £777,000 and Beardmore’s from £72,000 to £201,000.”

There was, too, the unfortunate story of the bribery by Vickers, Limited, of Rear Admiral Fujii, who, having recommended the placing of a Japanese order for a battleship cruiser with Vickers, was rewarded with an annual “goodwill” money gift for several years. The gallant Admiral was also on the pay-roll of other British companies.

On the whole, however, the British armament industry entered the Great War strong and unshaken. Its head and front was Vickers, Limited, owning great works at Barrow, Sheffield and Erith, and possessing a large measure of share-control in William Beardmore and Company, Limited, and in the Whitehead Torpedo Factory. Through the Whitehead Factory, Vickers had a link with its most important “competitor”, Armstrong, Whitworth and Company, Limited. Other links led via Cammell Laird and Company, Limited, to the Coventry Ordnance Company and to subsidiaries of the Nobel Dynamite Trusts.

The mere facts that Vickers admitted representatives of German firms to its directorships, and controlled factories in Spain, Italy, Russia, Japan and Canada did not unsettle political and religious leaders, who blessed Mars by holding shares in his workshops. Those investors who thought about the matter at all, did not think about it in terms of the Great Myth and the Great Convention. They looked at their dividend cheques, and concluded that, by arming the world, Britain’s Cannon Kings were ensuring the efficiency of factories constructed and conducted in the best interests of the nation. Orders from lesser powers kept machinery in trim, and enabled experiments to proceed without cost to the State. By sending experimental arms to “the dirty foreigner” and using his money to keep Britain’s armoury up to date, every purpose of God and Imperialism was being advanced.

Sir Basil Zaharoff, bagman for the Cannon Kings, who joined the submarine-producing Nordenfelt and the machine gun maker, Hiram Maxim, in the holy deadlock of finance then acted as best man when these Siamese twins wed Vickers, was still a shadowy,

unimportant figure unhonoured by his native Greece, or by Spain, or by Britain, all of whom were to come to love him.

Even less was known about the Nobel Trust, with the subsidiaries of which Vickers shared directors. Nobel, declared Erzberger, was the International Steel Cartel. It had branches in Britain, Japan and Germany. From these its trail led to France, Russia, Spain and other countries.

What was known—had not the Government Factories and Workshops' Committee of 1907 proved it?—was that England, home and beauty were safe in the keeping of the gun and explosive makers. Vickers, Nobel and the rest were efficient in Britain's defence. That was no myth. It was one of the eternal verities—until it was mocked and exposed by death on the battlefield.

In May, 1915, deliveries of rifles were 4,500 a week below promises and arrears were 50,000;⁽¹²⁾ deliveries of small arms ammunition were more than 200,000,000 rounds in arrears; the promise of a weekly delivery of 150 machine guns materialised in the delivery of 66; shell deliveries were *only* 378,506,000 in arrears. The position of high explosive shells was as follows:—

	Delivered by May 1st, 1915	Arrears on May 1st, 1915
Armstrongs	40,000	112,000
Vickers	3,000	89,000
Projectile Company	17,000	33,000
Hadfields	14,000	30,000
First Washington Company ..	15,000	111,000
Dick, Kerr	Nil	17,000
The Iron J. & P. Hill	Nil	19,000
Bethlemen Steel	Nil	22,000
Cammell Laird	9,000	34,000
	<hr/> 98,000	<hr/> 471,000

From every battlefield came cries for guns, munitions, grenades, all the materials for protection as well as weapons for offence. In June, 1915, deliveries of shells, meaning completed rounds of ammunition, were 1,526,400 against promises of 5,723,900.

For this scandalous failure—the effect of which was the failure of British efforts in the field, and a long list of British casualties—Lord Northcliffe held Kitchener responsible and attacked “Lord K of Chaos” with such vindictiveness that the *Daily Mail* was burned on the Stock Exchange. Kitchener's part in the affair was small. He did not interfere with the Cannon Kings charging the State (and the National Debt) twice the economic price of their product. He did not end the pressure put on Government officials by private friends to secure more and more munition orders for firms who could offer no prospect of delivery.

He was, probably, unaware of the state of affairs exposed by Mr. Gerald Stoney, President of the Engineering Section of the British Association in 1916:

"Hundreds of firms were willing and anxious to help in the production of munitions, but when they offered their services they were met in many cases with a blank refusal, and in all cases with little encouragement. When, under pressure from the Government, the (arms) Ring accepted outside help . . . the conditions imposed on the sub-contractors were unfair in the extreme." ⁽¹³⁾

Kitchener merely agreed to the scrapping, as old-fashioned and inefficient, of millions of service rifles which took three years to replace—rifles which, rescued from their grease cases in 1935, because a new pattern was not available in time, enabled their holders to score so many bull's-eyes at Bisley that the contest for the King's Cup became a farce. Kitchener was an incompetent soldier, who, disliking new ideas, obstructed the creation of the Ministry of Munitions and the establishment of State Munition Factories, which alone saved the situation abroad and prevented at home the bankruptcy to which the extortions of the Cannon Kings were heading the nation.

Yet this failure, this scandalous failure, if charged against the arms industry alone, cannot be sustained. The steel men, the Metal Exchange, and the ship owners all held up supplies and services in order to force up prices. During four tragic years British Big Business crucified hundreds of thousands of British soldiers on a Cross of Gold.

CHAPTER IV

SPIKING GUNS FOR HEROES

Big Business flies all flags even in time of war. It is not surprising that, since Vickers completed the fortification of the Dardanelles to the order of the Turkish Government in July, 1914, 18,000 British soldiers were blown to bits and nearly 50,000 British soldiers were maimed and mutilated on the Straits of Gallipoli by guns and probably by shells manufactured in British workshops. ⁽¹⁴⁾ It is not surprising that in the House of Commons on August 2nd, 1926, Mr. (now Lord) Ponsonby was able to elicit from Mr. (now Sir) Austen Chamberlain confirmation of the allegation that a British battleship was sunk in the Dardanelles by a mine on which a British firm had made its percentage of gross profit.

Since one must not rate too highly the honour of Huns and neutrals it is possible to learn with equanimity that during the Great War German and American industrialists were traitors to the decisions and desires of their own Governments.

At the Battle of Jutland in May, 1916, for example, the cannon balls of the British Fleet were guided to their German targets by gun sights delivered only six months earlier to a Dutch entrepreneur by two German manufacturers. At Douamont, near Verdun, German soldiers

were strangled on barbed wire exported to Great Britain from the Fatherland only two months before. The German Steel Manufacturers' Association found it more lucrative to export steel and pay a fine of five marks per ton on these exports than to do its plain duty by the German army—and it chose the path to profit.

Mr. Charles M. Schwab, American Steel Magnate, who was to weep publicly when accused of lack of patriotism, did not put loyalty to American neutrality above profits to his shareholders. He manufactured submarine parts in U.S.A., camouflaged them as motor car parts for consignment to Canada, and assembled them in Vickers Montreal Shipyard (which he had bought) whence the completed articles were sent to Great Britain. ⁽¹⁵⁾

Even less surprising is the fact that, in view of the failure of the British armaments business to meet its needs, the British Government was prepared to do a deal with any traitor.

But this cruel, surprising fact remains: although its own efforts to equip its own army were so puny, British Big Business consistently and throughout the War equipped the enemy and spiked the guns of British soldiers. To the question, "Were Big Businessmen tried for treason, shot for treason, as any soldier would have been?" only the answer of an Old Contemptible is adequate: "Were they, hell!"

Remember that in the zone of the British army all scraps of meat were collected for boiling down to fat and extracting glycerine, an essential ingredient of high explosives. Remember, too, the notorious Cadaver atrocity story, the story that Germans in desperation were boiling down dead bodies for fat. Now you can appreciate the real truth: that Germany, until 1917, was obtaining her fat supplies from Danish cattle, fattened by cattle cake bought from the British Empire.

In 1913, British exports to Denmark of oil cake from oil seed was 13,112 tons; in 1914, 23,304 tons; in 1915, 42,207 tons; and in 1916, 32,985 tons. During those same years, the export of live cattle from Denmark to Germany rose from 152,082 to 305,026. ⁽¹⁶⁾ War-time increase in imports of vegetable oils and fats enabled Denmark to economise no less than 200,000 tons of native fodder which was used to serve Germany's war-time needs.

Lest, before we go farther, the reader doubts the credibility of these statements, unchallenged and unchallengeable though they are, let us quote from the findings of Lord Justice Scrutton in an action brought by the Crown ⁽¹⁷⁾ against a firm of tea merchants for exporting large quantities of tea to Copenhagen without taking adequate measures to ensure that it should not reach Germany—an action which the defendants' adviser, paid for their advocacy and not for their patriotism, won on a point of law. Said Lord Justice Scrutton:

"It was clear that the goods consigned to Caroe did go to Germany, and it was also clear that the defendants suspected that the goods were going to Germany. The course which they adopted was (1) to tell the Government the names of their customers and to ask whether any of them were

suspicious. But they did not tell the Government what they knew; and the Government did not necessarily know how large their shipments to Caroe were as compared with the previous shipments to him and their shipments to other customers; (2) they took declarations from Caroe. The form of declaration which Caroe usually gave was that either the tea was for 'home trade only' or 'will not be re-exported by me.' Both of these forms left the obvious loophole that Caroe should make a sale in Denmark to someone who would then re-export and Caroe did not seem anxious to extend his declaration, nor were the defendants pressing to see that he did extend it."

With tea in mind—the price of which rose from 7½d. to 10d. per lb. as the result of the increase in British re-exports in the early days of the War—let us examine the tarnish on copper, one of the most precious metals in war-time and a metal of inestimable value to Germany. British exports of copper to Sweden for the years 1913, 1914 and 1915 were 517 tons, 710 tons and 1,085 tons respectively. Swedish exports to Germany and Austria were 1,215 tons in 1913, and 3,960 in 1914; later figures are not available.

In the first six weeks of 1916, according to Lord Devonport speaking in the House of Lords on the 22nd of February, 1916, 200,000 tons of zinc ore, vital raw material in munition making, escaped the British blockade, reached Liege via Rotterdam and was converted into spelter and circulated all over Germany. Zinc ore was used in the preparation of the hydrogen gas with which Germany inflated her Zeppelins—yes, the Zeppelins that bombed Great Britain from 1915 onwards!

Tin, copper, nickel and zinc, all precious war materials, flowed in increasing quantity from Great Britain to Germany through the Scandinavian countries.

Consider Cotton. During the last ten years Lancashire, the domain of King Cotton, has been under the hammer. Reaction from inflation of prices and inflation of capital has brought desolation and despair to what were once the golden valleys of Industrial Britain. Twenty years ago Lancashire held the hammer; the State and the State's soldiers were the anvil. For twelve months after the outbreak of war cotton remained outside the list of contraband goods. Exports of raw, carded and waste cotton from Great Britain and the British Empire to Sweden rose from 1,940 tons in 1913 to 10,300 tons in 1915. Exports of cotton piece-goods rose from 13,000,000 yards in 1913, to 21,000,000 yards in 1916. Swedish exports to Germany and Austria, 236 tons in 1913, rose to 76,000 tons in 1915. They fell to vanishing point in 1916—and remained there.

It is not at all improbable that Denmark, Norway and Holland were all supplying the Central Countries with cotton, raw material of nitro-cellulose, as well as of clothing, during the War. Certainly the figures of exports from British sources to these three neutrals are revealing.

Denmark took 14 tons of cotton waste and raw cotton in 1913; in 1915 she took 3,500 tons; and in 1916, 6,000 tons. The same country in 1913 took 16,000,000 yards of piece cotton; in 1916 she took 46,000,000 yards—a quantity equivalent to over 16 yards per head of her population. Between 1913 and 1915 exports of cotton to Norway leaped from 460 tons to 6,600 tons, and of cotton piece goods from 17,000,000 yards to 22,000,000 yards, the figure for 1916 being 37,000,000 yards. Holland's share in Britain's cotton exports increased by 100,000 tons in the years 1913-1915.

German soldiers were clad and shod with the aid of British manufactures. They sheltered in pillboxes spared from the Fatherland's supplies because British cement was sustaining the exportable surplus which Germany was exchanging for other essential materials of war. They were comforted with beer and their families at home were fed with fish because British coal filled the bunkers of neutral ships sailing the Baltic.

Here is revealed the real difficulty of the application of economic sanctions, not by an aggregation of States potentially disloyal to a League of Nations but by Great Britain alone, the world's greatest maritime power, enjoying the absolute loyalty of her own people and her Allies.

Quite early in the War Germany suffered from a coal shortage. The conquest of the Belgian coalfields eased her position somewhat. Her coal requirements, however, were colossal. There was the demand of her own industries to be met—a demand so great that in May and June, 1917, when the Allies were on the offensive on the Western Front, Ludendorff had to release 50,000 workmen at the request of the Coal Controller, a withdrawal from which "the (German) Army never recovered." There was, too, the need for supplying coal to those neutral countries, especially Scandinavian countries, which were feeding the Fatherland with food and raw materials. In point of fact Germany failed, even with the aid of Belgian coal resources, to provide steam power for Scandinavia. And Germany's failure was made good by the Allies.

Scandinavian furnaces were built to burn British small coal. Scandinavian ships were fitted with bunkers which only Welsh nuts filled efficiently and economically. Coal was the commodity with which Great Britain bought the contents of her breakfast table, the provision of which was the greatest single factor in Scandinavian economy; and although Great Britain sustained coal supplies to Scandinavia during the War, a not inconsiderable cause of the shortage of foodstuffs suffered by British housewives was the diversion of Scandinavian food from the British to the Central Europe market.

In the years 1913, 1914, 1915 and 1916 respectively, British coal received by Denmark amounted to 3,034,240 tons, 3,059,162 tons, 3,130,642 tons and 2,305,409 tons. In these same years the coal received by Sweden amounted to (in metric tons) 4,878,854, 4,626,932, 3,835,687, 4,036,452: and by Norway 2,227,620, 2,441,892, 2,648,105

and 2,328,974. Of course there were stipulations in the supply of coal as well as of boots and shoes to neutral countries. The commodities were not to aid the enemy. Importers found offending against such stipulations were placed on a black list. The regulations were evaded with monotonous regularity. The black list was a subject of jest.

There were, too, political considerations operating against a blockade of neutral countries. There were maritime agreements with U.S.A. which kept the seas open to American sabotage of Allied efforts until America entered the War. There was the desire to maintain friendly economic relations with neighbours upon whom Great Britain was dependent for supplies of food. Great Britain, indeed, guaranteed the collection, processing, manufacture and delivery of Scandinavian wheat supplies during the War.

But to men determined that the success of Britain in destroying the German armies in the field and in wrecking the morale of the civil population in the Fatherland was paramount; to men determined that, at whatever cost to private profit and private interest, success must be achieved, hard facts ought to have counted against these political considerations. The hard facts were these: Great Britain's coal power, which she was entitled to exercise as she pleased and which she could have exercised without any contravention of any international agreements, might have been directed to making Scandinavia the "food ally" of the Entente. Yet while British imports of food from Norway, Sweden and Denmark fell from 344,785 tons in 1913 to 191,916 tons in 1916, the exports of these three countries to Germany rose from 252,128 tons to 620,756 tons.

Millions of tons of essential war materials were sent from the British Empire to Germany through neutral countries while the struggle was at its most intensive stage. British ships fired by British coal carried the traitors' cargo. British coal stoked the furnaces of workshops in which raw materials were converted into German munitions. British coal steamed the ships and trains which carried these munitions over neutral borders into the enemy's camp. Every ounce of British muscle, every £1 sterling of British money involved in the production, transport and financing of this trade represented recruitment to the man power of Germany and a gift of golden bullets to Germany's armoury.

And all this, the story of positive treason, is only half the tale. The other half is the story of negative patriotism; and that is a story of which the half has never yet been told.

What is known is that in December, 1916, although there was a vast number of ships on the British register—ships enjoying the protection afforded by the British flag and fleet at the expense of the British taxpayer—there were only about 3,500 ocean going ships of more than 1,600 gross tons. The whereabouts and activities of 1,494 of these ships were unknown, although their owners, living in Great Britain, must have appreciated the nation's shipping requirements.

The President of the Board of Trade had informed the Cabinet that "we start this winter (1916) with a shortage which we see no means of filling by building, buying or chartering estimated at 400 steamers of 4,000 gross tons." Sir Charles Fielding, of the Ministry of Munitions, placed on record his view that if they were all pressed into service, there were sufficient ships to secure Britain's imports. Yet the nation, even before Germany's submarine campaign, was heading for famine while shipowners were trading for profits.

Positive treason and negative patriotism, the conscription of human life and limb while wealth and property were permitted to remain free and almost undirected—all this had its effects on the length of the War.

Germany organised for and expected a short sharp struggle. She did not anticipate that Great Britain would range herself against the Central Countries. When the Entente Cordiale closed its ranks, Germany analysed the nature of her task. It was to win the race for victory in the field against the march of starvation at home. The final spurt in the death race began in February, 1917, when the Kaiser commanded "unrestricted" U-Boat warfare against the shipping of the world. By now, national co-operative effort was strengthening Great Britain; the blockade, still evaded though it was, beat the submarine. In 1918 the Allies forced an issue which, on the expert view, would have been forced in 1916 but for positive treason and negative patriotism.

"If Blood be the price of treason

Lord God we have paid in full"

a Kipling might have written of these two tragic years. Over 350,000 British soldiers paid with their lives; nearly 1,000,000 British soldiers paid in the pain of wounds and shell-shock; the Nation is still paying interest on the £3,500,000,000 by which the National Debt was inflated in that final fling for victory.

CHAPTER V

CONGENITAL IDIOTS ENTER PARADISE

Mr. Walter Runciman has declared that even a congenital idiot can make profits in wartime. As War President of the Board of Trade, he knows. In the first twenty-six months of the Great War, the profits of British shipowners, excluding the profits from passenger liners and allowing for insurance on inflated values, were in excess of £300,000,000. This estimate was made in January, 1917, by Sir Leo Chiozza Money, then Under Secretary at the Ministry of Shipping. It was verified by Sir Josiah Stamp, then at the Inland Revenue. To it can be added the opinion of Sir Charles Fielding, that if the State had had to pay in 1917 the private freight rate obtaining in 1916, the same amount of imports carried in State-controlled ships at national fixed rates would have cost £34,000,000 more than they did in fact cost.

There, for purposes of test and comparison, information on war profits and war profiteering really ends. The extent of war sacrifice

in terms of human life and impositions upon the taxpayer can be measured. Except in those commodities where inefficient production and obviously excessive cost provoked State action, however, the story of the sacrifice of communal welfare to private gain is, and will remain, largely a sealed book.

The public outcry against profiteering was not answered until August, 1919, when a farcical creation of Local Tribunals and Consumers' Councils acted so unwillingly that the life flickered out of it in May, 1921.

5 — There was, of course, the Excess Profits Duty operated from September, 1915, and applying taxes varying from 80 per cent. (1917) to 40 per cent. (1915) on all revenues "in excess of the average made in the two or three years before the war." Mr. Bonar Law revealed how the average of pre-war profit was interpreted when he told the House of Commons that his yield from shipping investments in one year "was 47 per cent. after paying Excess Profits Tax." The very terms of the duty made evasion easy. It was possible for firms, through allowable costs, to renew the entire capital value of their land, building, plant and rolling stock before making returns subject to duty. Farmers and professional men were not brought within the scope of the tax. Yet from the tax year 1915-1916 until the tax year 1921-1922, when the Excess Profits Duty was abolished, its net receipts totalled £1,130,000,000! There is Board of Inland Revenue sanction for the fact that, at June 30th, 1919, the possessions of individuals were £5,000,000,000 in excess of their pre-war fortunes, and this after paying additional income-tax and Excess Profits Duty amounting to £1,731,000,000 during the four years of struggle.

Incomplete though they are, the facts revealed by the Ministry of Munitions' efforts to control prices provide another rough guide to the course of war profits. They reveal that the arms makers did not regard their failure to munition British soldiers as a reason for refraining from large scale robbery of the public purse. When the Ministry of Munitions challenged the prices (20/- to 23/-) being charged for 18-pounder shells in 1916, the representative of one big firm admitted frankly that the price could be reduced by 6/- or 7/-, although every arms maker declined to submit to the Ministry's Costing Committee "their actual manufacturing costs in order that a reasonable profit might be arranged." Indeed, the Costing Committee were obliged to report that "past prices have contained an excessive profit which they are probably unwilling to disclose"—a conclusion that should be read in conjunction with the results of the yield of the Excess Profits Duty—and that "there is reason to believe that members of some of the firms have been approaching several Departments of the Ministry evidently with a view to bringing indirect influence to bear which they hope may result favourably to them. It is obvious that if such overtures are not discouraged the negotiations will be seriously prejudiced."

Dr. Christopher Addison forestalled these approaches. On the

basis of the experience of national factories, he forced the acceptance of reduced, but reasonable, prices for various types of shells. The result was a saving to the State of £400,000 a week; a saving on 85,000,000 shells of £35,000,000. There was, on the authority of Mr. David Lloyd George, ⁽¹⁸⁾ a reduction in the price of Lewis guns from £165 to £35—a saving of £14,000,000. Over the whole field of armaments, declared Mr. Lloyd George, the costing system effected, before the end of the War, savings totalling £440,000,000.

Even in days of danger the Great Convention operated; operated so harshly that statesmen who were no friends of State Socialism had to restrict its plunder.

We have examined the leakage of cotton waste through neutral countries to Germany. The ring round cotton waste forced up prices to the Home Government from £42 to £70 per ton, the profit of one large mill being “not less than £20 per ton,” and equal to “over 300 per cent. on the actual cost outlay for the mill for treating the cotton waste.” ⁽¹⁹⁾

In wool, hides, flax, jute and hemp, all contraband goods which found their way out of the country, the profit surrendered to the Exchequer through State action exceeded £27,000,000. On the coal providing power to British factories as well as to neutral privateers, coal owners made and admitted an average profit of £22,700,000 in seven years from 1914-1921 against an annual average profit of £12,800,000 in the four years from 1909-1913—the wartime average, of course, falling during the period of coal control. ⁽²⁰⁾

That the policy of maximising profits was pursued deliberately during the Great War is a reasonable deduction from facts elicited by the Standing Committee on Trusts in 1919 and the Sub-Committees set up under the Profiteering Acts 1921-1922.

Price fixing cartels, production controlling combines, and market rigging rings all flourished in the years of slaughter. The National Light Castings Association was found to have as its object that of “raising and keeping up the price to the buyer of goods and articles made and/or supplied by its members.” Thirty-five associations covered the iron and steel industry with price and output regulations. Copper was the most highly controlled of the non-ferrous metals. The textile, electrical and building industries were, and are, in the grip of monopolies. A Labour Committee on Production which included Mr. Sidney Webb, the late Mr. William Graham and Mr. John A. Hobson, reported as follows: “. . . it may be very greatly to the advantage of the firm which has a more or less monopolistic position to restrict output. That such restriction is in fact practised to a degree amounting to exploitation of the consumer (in war time the State) ⁽²¹⁾ is necessarily a matter of inference, but morally certain. The advantage which may accrue may be illustrated by the following figures from two industries in which they obtain: (1) Between 1913 and 1919 the percentage of profit made by Lever Brothers and thirteen associated companies increased from 10.93 to 16.23. The money turnover increased during

the same period from £3,384,725 to £8,912,451 without any increase in tonnage output. (2) In 1918-19 the output of Messrs. J. & P. Coats, sewing cotton was 20 per cent. less by weight than in the years 1913-14. But the profits realised on the smaller output were 86 per cent. greater than on the pre-war output, being £4,895,149 in 1919, as against £2,634,388 in 1914. (22)

Still another test is available to the seeker after facts about other people's profit—the test of capital accumulation.

Vickers, Ltd., for example, entered the Great War with the comparatively modest capital of £9,488,639. It emerged in 1921 with the great capital (including reserves) of £30,916,800, an increase of 226 per cent. In the course of these years Vickers added thirty new companies to its existing list of sixty associates and subsidiaries. Many of these were private companies upon whose acquisitiveness the eye of the inquisitive may not fall. Eight of the associates, however, including Vickers itself, enjoyed capital increases of £33,340,110 between 1913 and 1921—the rises exceeding the total 1913 capital by £13,000,000.

Between 1913 and 1922, the capital of Birmingham Small Arms—"the chief if not the only maker of the Lewis machine gun" (23) and, presumably, one of the firms whose price State costing cut severely—rose from £1,632,718 to £8,721,790, two pleasant distributions of bonus shares from reserve funds helping to mark up this increase to 435 per cent., although only £3,000,000 was expended on plant in the period August, 1914, to September, 1920.

Mention of bonus shares directs attention to an interesting practice developed during the war to hide profits.

Assuming that a firm has a capital of £1,000 and is making annual profits of £1,000, it may distribute one bonus share for every two shares held, thus disposing of £500, and declare a nominal profit of 50 per cent. By repeating that process in the following year it reduces its nominal profit to 25 per cent. In the course of four years it will have repaid its shareholders their entire capital twice over and be returning profit at the moderate nominal rate of 16 per cent., and at an actual rate of 100 per cent.; and no income tax is levied on this increment in shareholders' earnings.

The distribution of bonus shares reached its height during the agitation against profiteering in 1920. In that year twenty-one iron, coal and steel companies with £9,965,005 of paid-up capital presented shareholders with £6,141,171 of free shares; twenty-six engineering and ship-building companies with £8,156,570 of paid-up capital "gave away" £4,562,874; twenty-two food, drink, and tobacco companies with £19,827,466 of paid-up capital handed out £7,779,094. In all, 235 companies with an aggregate capital of £97,957,114, distributed £65,240,398—largely the still undistributed secret profits of war-time trading.

Comparison of share values, taking the highest price in 1913 in relation to the highest price of the early post-war period, provides

at least a hint of the war-time profits of the money-spinners on the Stock Exchange, who, like the recipients of bonus shares, escaped taxation on transactions involving the purchase and sale of stocks and shares.

Burma Oil leaped from £3 15/16 to £22 $\frac{3}{4}$; Jeremiah Rotherham (clothiers) from 37/- to £15 $\frac{3}{4}$; William Cory & Son (coal) from 28/1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 78/9; Baldwins (steel) from 21/9 to 60/-; Threlfalls Brewery from 28/- to 71/3; and Clan Line (ship-owners) from £13 $\frac{3}{4}$ to £55. These few examples, showing share appreciation ranging from 182 per cent. to 731 per cent., were not at all unusual.

Who paid? The consumer, as usual. And in this instance, where vague abstractions between "consumer" and "taxpayer" disappear under the concrete weight of War Debt, it is true to say that the consumer continues to pay, that many generations of consumers yet unborn will continue to pay.

The cost of the War comprised payments for soldiers' wages, food, clothing and arms. These costs were met from day to day, partly out of increased taxation, mainly from borrowed money—nearly £7,000,000,000 of it. Where did this £7,000,000,000 raised in Government Loans and including the pickings of bankers, stock-brokers, and publicity men, come from? To quote Mr. Philip (now Lord) Snowden, the most conservative British Chancellor of modern times, it came "from real savings, from the reserve funds of business concerns, and by the creation of bank credits."⁽²⁴⁾ In other words, it came from the money hoarded by people in chests and stockings, from the surplus profit—much of it war profits—of big business, and from thin air!

Let Mr. Snowden explain further: "The Banks have been encouraged to lend to their customers for investment in War Loan. By this practice additional credit has been created for which there is no security in real wealth. In addition to this, the Banks have themselves subscribed largely to the war loans out of deposits standing to the credit of their customers. The war loan scrip obtained by the Banks for their investments has been deposited in the Bank of England as valid security for further loans to the Government. By this manipulation of credits a vast amount of Government indebtedness has been created which is not represented by savings."

Lest a Socialist turned Viscount be suspect, let Sir Josiah Stamp, now a Director of the Bank of England, underline the point: "People were induced to subscribe to War Loans by raising loans at the bank, either on the security of the loan itself or other collateral."⁽²⁵⁾

Who shall say how much this fictitious credit, this money conjured out of space, contributed to War Debt? Certainly no banker! But an eminent scientist has essayed an estimate.⁽²⁶⁾ He puts the figure at £2,000,000,000—a debt of honour on which the consumer has been paying, and is destined to go on paying, interest amounting to nearly £100,000,000 a year.

Beside this figure of fake money, the evasion by wealthy patriots

of their income tax liabilities during the War was a flea-bite—a mere £100,000,000!

CHAPTER VI

THE WAR THE GENERALS PREPARED FOR

In his classic study of warfare, Sir Edward Creasy reviewed seven hundred battles fought over a period of two thousand three hundred and five years. He concluded that, from Marathon (490 B.C.), where the Greeks saved Western civilisation from the onslaught of the Persians, until Waterloo (1815), where Englishmen and Prussians destroyed Napoleon's dream of power, only fifteen engagements had had a decisive influence in the history of the world.

Here, to the lay mind at least, is evidence that war in general is futile and that war Generals in particular are fools; evidence which the Great War underlined again and again with blood-red strokes.

In 1896 Parliament repealed an Act limiting the speed of mechanically-propelled vehicles to four miles an hour, and dispensed with the road-safety measure that such vehicles should be preceded by a man waving a red flag. The internal-combustion engine was already eleven years old. Yet eighteen years after Parliament released the brake on mechanical progress the British Army entered the Great War equipped with only one motor transport vehicle!⁽²⁷⁾

That was a joke, a tragic joke; but it was no accident. It was true then, as it had been for centuries before, and as it is to-day, that the war the generals prepare for is always the last war. Militarists are a caste apart. They are born apart, they live and intrigue and die apart from other men. They suffer, and the nations who entrust their safety to the military caste must also suffer, from the inbreeding implicit in the military caste system. That system promises promotion only to men of wealthy parentage, proud presence, and with wives of aristocratic origin; and more especially to those who, being thus endowed, are prepared to divide against their fellows in the High Command while maintaining with them a united front against the lower ranks and the Parliamentary representatives of the public, whom the militarists love to deride as "politicians."

So it happens that almost all men of military genius are civilians. Rome has no soldier to place beside Caesar, a politician until his forty-second year. Great Britain has no name more illustrious than Cromwell, a politician until his forty-third year. Posterity, of a certainty, will place beside Cromwell the name of another civilian who never was a soldier and who, perhaps for that reason, provoked the most calumnious campaign ever directed against any one man by the British Press—Richard Burdon Haldane.

Haldane was driven from office and threatened with assault in the street. Yet, although careless of public applause, he enjoyed

his moment of triumph. It was at dusk on the day when, the victory won, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig rode with the King through London, a visitor called on Haldane and, after some misgiving—he might have been an assassin!—was admitted to the study at Queen Anne's Gate where the rejected Lord Chancellor sat solitary and unsung. The visitor left a book, a volume of Despatches from the War Front, in which he had written:

“To Viscount Haldane of Cloan—the greatest Secretary of State for War England has ever had. In grateful remembrance of his successful efforts in organising the Military Forces for a War on the Continent, notwithstanding much opposition from the Army Council and the half-hearted support of his Parliamentary friends.

Haig, F.M.”

In this loyalty and recognition of ability transcending his own—of which his submission to the leadership of Field-Marshal Foch in 1918 was another example—in this alone, Haig showed genius. Like most of his fellows on the field of battle he was a blundering and, indeed, a murderous half-wit.

As long ago as 1905, on his appointment as Secretary of State for War, Haldane began to do that of which the military mind was incapable. He began to visualise the nature and the terrain of the next war, to create the organisation fully equipped to solve the problems that would arise, and to reduce that organisation to what he was pleased to call “first principles.”

He foresaw war on the Continent. He learned that more than two months would elapse before so small a force as 80,000 men could be put on the Continent, that in its organisation and leadership the British Army was a “paper” army. By 1911 Haldane had formed the British Expeditionary Force, established the Territorial Army, and, since the Militia was under no obligation to serve abroad, substituted for it the Special Reserve.

When war did come the Expeditionary Force was equipped and ready; but Lord Kitchener, Haldane's and the nation's nominee for the responsible task of conducting operations as Secretary of State for War, immediately scrapped the organisation of which the Expeditionary Force was proving so effective a spear-head!

Let Haldane, who regarded Kitchener as “a great man and a great moral asset to the nation,” deliver the verdict which every student must endorse:

“. . . I was unable to prevail on him to adopt, or even to make much real use of, the Territorial organisation I had provided. . . . He knew nothing of the modern science of military organisation which had been evolved in Europe. . . . He insisted on raising not Territorial line after Territorial line, each of which would have stepped into the place of the one in front as it moved away, but new ‘Kitchener’ armies. . . . The result was the confusion which arises from sudden departure from

settled principles. . . . In London there was no general staff worth the name—none, for example, that could exercise a guiding and restraining influence when the Dardanelles Expedition was projected. . . . Move his mind on to modern lines I could not.”

Of Sir John French, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in the first war year, books on military matters tell us little. There is little to tell except that the Earl of Ypres fathered all his failures on to his subordinates and claimed their successes as his own.

Lord Haig was, and remains, an almost legendary figure. Consider, however, the view of the military realist.

In *This, Our Army*⁽²⁸⁾ Captain J. R. Kennedy, M.C., editor of the *Army, Navy and Air Force Gazette*, writes:

“Haig was not a success in the opening phases of the war; he became the author of the *blutbad* of the Somme as the Germans called it, meaning, of course, for us. He was then allowed to indulge in another such bath at Ypres. No other General in the world has ever been allowed to sacrifice a million men uselessly and survive without even enquiry.”

The layman may be forgiven if he doubts the validity of the able Captain's final statement. In time of war, especially, the infallibility of military leadership is promoted with religious fervour. Thus, when Lord Northcliffe decided to fasten blame for the shell shortage on Kitchener, the *Daily Mail* was burned on the Stock Exchange and its circulation fell dismally. Yet Northcliffe himself was fascinated by the doctrine of the infallibility of military leadership. He opposed the recall of Haldane to the War Office. To put the organisation of the nation's man power and economic resources into the hands of a civilian who had shown himself to be a genius rather than into the hands of a militarised moron would, Northcliffe argued, be insane.⁽²⁹⁾ While the war was running its course, the Press Peer even contemplated boosting his own nominees into leadership of the Allied Armies, one of them being Cadorna, whose incompetence led to the Italian defeat at Caporetto, placed the whole Allied cause in jeopardy, and so destroyed Italian faith in popular Government (which was in no real sense responsible for the disaster) that Mussolini was enabled to add a black chapter to the history of Democracy in Europe !

It was true, and it is true, that if a naval officer hazards the millions of pounds of property called a battleship he must face court martial. But the end of military adventure hazarding the lives of a million private soldiers is, for the Commander, a peerage, a State bounty, and a burial in Westminster Abbey.

Captain Kennedy reveals the menace of the system. Passchendaele, he tells us, was the result of Haig's “disloyalty to his Allies and his own Government, of misrepresentation both before and after the operation, and these are not matters of opinion but of proven,

recorded and uncontested fact. . . ." And Haig repeated his criminal errors at St. Quentin, when Gough's Army became the next sacrifice to the Field-Marshal's infallibility and incompetence. The official records of St. Quentin "afford another proof of his deception."

A hundred biographies and autobiographies testify to the painful and even dirty intrigues in which politicians indulged during the war years; but the relation between soldier and politician was worse than tense—it was homicidal.

Under date December 18th, 1916, the personal diary of the late Sir Robert Donald, then editor of the now defunct *Daily Chronicle*, quotes General Sir William Robertson, who superseded Kitchener as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, as seeming "to be of opinion that there was a system of espionage carried on from 10 Downing Street."⁽³⁰⁾

Asquith was then occupant of 10 Downing Street. The new broom introduced by the new Prime Minister, Mr. D. Lloyd George, may or may not have swept away espionage. It certainly seems to have raised dust enough to clog the wheels of the machinery of State.

On February 21st, 1918, a Colonel Repington, intimate of Robertson, was convicted and fined for publishing in a daily newspaper an article disclosing the military plans of the Supreme War Council to the public and, of course, the enemy. After his conviction Repington was congratulated by Robertson on "doing his best in the general interest"! Major Samuel Maurice has placed on record (*Daily Telegraph*, June 20th, 1936) the statement that Robertson instructed him not to supply Repington with information after January, 1918, when Repington left the *Times* and joined the *Morning Post*. It is beyond question, however, that the aim of Repington's attack was to safeguard Robertson's position.

There followed quickly another interesting incident.

On May 6th, 1918, Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, until a few days before Director of Military Operations at the War Office and now awaiting a command on the Western Front, launched a newspaper attack on the Prime Minister. The case of the Director, who was in possession of "secret statistics" of British military strength in the various theatres of war, was that Mr. D. Lloyd George was misrepresenting Britain's military strength in his Parliamentary statements and thereby was placing upon Haig responsibility and blame for German successes at the Front.

The suggestion of the Director's military critics was that Maurice, like Repington, an intimate friend of Robertson, was anxious to discredit the Prime Minister in order to prevent Robertson's supersession by Sir Henry Wilson.

"Either of these two little *coups d'état*," writes Captain Peter E. Wright in *At the Supreme War Council*, "would have made Robertson Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Maurice Director of Military Operations till we lost the war. . . ."

From the public point of view the issue has never been stated more clearly than by Captain J. R. Kennedy in *This, Our Army*:

"Even if it can be accepted that these events were the result only of a pure and disinterested sense of duty and patriotism—and it is difficult to reach this conclusion—the fact remains that secret Allied plans had been communicated to the Press by a correspondent enjoying the confidence of the most responsible soldier at the War Office and of his assistant, that these soldiers subsequently launched through the Press an attack on the Prime Minister . . . both were forgiven."

And how !

On August 6th, 1919, Parliament distributed £375,000 in largess among the generals, good, indifferent, and superseded. Haig was awarded £100,000, French £50,000, and Robertson £10,000.

And the Army rank and file, the grandest military material ever squandered by incompetent leadership? Already fobbed off with paltry gratuities and promises of paltry pensions, it, too, was rewarded by Parliament on that August day. It was given a vote of thanks !

Is the Army of to-day, costing the nation £1,500,000 a week, all right ?

It is manned, as before, from a military caste which deprecates intelligence and initiative in its officers and awards promotion only to its senile seniors. The man below depends upon the patronage of the man above for advancement. Physical fitness is an end in itself. Polo is encouraged for horsemanship, hunting for developing "an eye for country"; but motoring and a knowledge of engineering are not essential to sound modern officership.

The war the generals prepare for is the last war—but one !

When Greeks fought Persians at four yards distance the ancient form of bayonet made a brave show. It is still an ornament of the British Army, but its use is unknown except to drill instructors inciting raw recruits "not to tickle the bastards, but to stick it in their guts."

Three hundred years ago the musket boomed the death knell of cavalry; keen minds visualised wars being fought at 400 yards. At Cambrai, eighteen short years ago, British Generals were still ignorant of the ancient lesson, and although cavalry action failed time and time again it is still, subject to a mild dose of reorganisation, regarded as important in modern warfare.

The coming of the aeroplane suggests that the next war will be fought at a range, not of four hundred yards, but of four hundred miles. Yet our Defence Service remain unco-ordinated, Generals continue to think of warfare in terms of those mass formations against mass formations, which will ensure that no future Creasy will describe another decisive battle since victory will go to the swiftest murderers of the air, the swiftest distributors of poison gas, the swiftest dispensers of horror among the civil populace.

All these are matters which may not be discussed easily in Press or Parliament lest information be given to enemies already in possession of all the facts they want to know. More particularly, these matters may not be discussed by soldiers. A young lieutenant, seeking the favours of a female agent for a foreign Government by showing her the plan of a tank, is doomed to disgrace and imprisonment in the Tower of London. If, however, he is wise enough to enter the paid service of a private armaments firm, he may present the lady with the tank itself, and he will find the War Office ready to facilitate consummation of his desire by releasing him from his commission.

The result? Of the sons of wealthy families educated at Sandhurst and Waterloo, at a cost (of which the State pays the bulk) of £310 and £463 per head per annum respectively, Sir Philip Chetwode, former Commander-in-Chief of our Indian Army, says:

“ . . . the mediocre brain and the lazy man goes slowly up the ladder at much the same speed as his more brilliant and persevering brothers. . . .

“ A study of papers sent in by officers sitting for their promotion examinations, and even for the Staff College, makes one glad that the results are not published to the world with critical comments by the examiners. . . .

“ The longer I remain in the Service the more wooden and more regulation-bound do I find the average British officer to be.”⁽³¹⁾

CHAPTER VII

RECREATION FOR TIRED WARRIORS

During two weeks of March, 1925, Britain's sensational Press provided a public peephole into the private life of an officer of the High Command. A lady well known in Society sued her former husband “for return of sums of money she alleged she had lent him, and for payment of an allowance.” The former husband, a Lieutenant-Colonel with aristocratic associations, answered that chastity was a condition of any promise of alimony and the ex-wife had not retained her chastity; and he counterclaimed in respect of furniture belonging to him, which, he said, she had sold.

After eighteen hours' cross-examination of the plaintiff, and the plea by the defendant from the witness box that her statements were untrue and that he had been entirely under her influence, the lady was awarded compensation amounting to £5,000.

Part of the wife's story was that in return for her favours Sir John Cowans, Quartermaster-General attached to the Supreme War Council, had promised to “do a great deal for her husband,” and that the husband's promotion from a minor post in Jamaica to a major post at Gibraltar was part of that corrupt bargain. While repudiating all knowledge of the bargain, the ex-husband said “it was through Sir John Cowans that he got his job at Jamaica.”

The exact amount of truth in the statements and counter-

statements need not concern us here. Probably it is best indicated, and the view of every decent citizen is best expressed, in the comments that fell from the lips of the late Mr. Justice McCordie during the course of his summing-up:

"I recognise and feel that the conduct of the defendant in permitting his wife's liaison with Sir John Cowans is conduct which is gravely to be condemned.

"Right up to within three weeks of the presentation of his petition for divorce Mrs. — was openly the mistress of Sir John Cowans.

"I ask myself: Is it true that about the third time that she met Sir John Cowans she dined with him alone, and he said that if she were more to him he would give her husband a good appointment? Does that ring true? Men of the world, it is very odd if that took place."

Odd, indeed !

But odder still is the fact admitted on both sides and accepted by the Judge, that in the midst of a national crisis a man holding a highly responsible position—an attempt to keep Sir John Cowans's name out of the case proved abortive—should be engaging himself with the wife of a subordinate officer whatever the price he paid for her favours; and the admitted facts must be given due weight, in view of the paucity of evidence, of how one aspect of the age-old problem of finding recreation for tired warriors was solved during four sad, mad years.

Morals are largely a matter of geography. Remove a man from the influence of home and the prospect of normal, healthy satisfaction of his desires, impose upon him the unnatural way of life of the military barrack, and the barriers against immorality are likely to break down.

As long ago as 1860, when this grave Army problem first began to excite the public mind, the rate of sickness from primary syphilis among men in fourteen military stations in these islands was 146 per thousand, the rate of sickness from secondary syphilis in the same year being 32.73 per thousand.

To meet this evil, Parliament in 1866 ordained the periodical examination—in plain words the licensing—of prostitutes in scheduled areas. It refused to apply the principle of examination (which had been abrogated in the Army only seven years before) to men lest examination offend their modesty and because, so far as the Navy was concerned, it had never existed.

Thus there arose the first female "army of occupation"—the "Queen's Women," as they called themselves—enjoying a special status since they were kept "clean" by Her Majesty's Government for the diversion of Her Majesty's soldiers.

The moral muddle and the menace to young soldiers and to young women arising everywhere from these provisions of the Contagious Diseases Act were ended only after twenty years of

courageous propaganda. Mrs. Josephine Butler devoted her life to destroying the widely-held and comfortable view that in these matters ignorance is bliss and in inducing the nation to make at least a tentative approach to the truth that knowledge must precede virtue.⁽³²⁾

Twenty more years were to elapse before the evil of licensed prostitution was to be ended among the female camp-followers of the British Army in India—girls, indeed children, “press-ganged” into prostitution and called the “Queen’s Daughters.”

“There were placed with each regiment (of about 1,000 soldiers) from twelve to fifteen native women, who lived in houses or tents . . . called *chaklas*,” wrote Dr. Kate Bushnell and Mrs. Elizabeth Andrews in a report which created a sensation in the early nineties of last century.⁽³³⁾ “These women were allowed to consort with British soldiers only—and were registered by the cantonment magistrate, tickets of licence being given them.”

Attached to each cantonment was a *Malhaldarni*, who besides supervising the girls procured them.

“If a girl is not sufficiently attractive to earn her living,” one of those supervisors told the investigators, “I send her away and get another in her place. . . . I go to the cantonment magistrate and he gives me five, ten, twenty or fifty rupees as the case may demand. To buy a very young attractive girl I shall be furnished with fifty rupees. There is always plenty of money to get them with.”

The aim of the cantonments, for the suppression of which much credit goes to the late Lord Kitchener, was to preserve the health of the Army. It is of interest to note that, while agitation for their suppression was at its height, the British Government received two memorials signed entirely by women. The first memorial, presented on April 24th, 1897, declared:

“We feel it is the duty of the State which of necessity collects together large numbers of unmarried men in military service to protect them from the consequences of evil which are in fact unavoidable.”

The second memorial, presented on July 31st, 1897, asserted:

“No permanent diminution of disease will ever be obtained by measures which do not strike primarily at vice itself.”

Memorial No. 1 was signed by 123 women members of the titled aristocracy and associated with the higher military caste. Memorial No. 2 was signed by 61,437 women members of the working, middle, and professional classes.

Escape from this officially organised defilement was possible only when a girl became diseased. Then she was free to spread defilement among the native civil population. So arose the sneer that the first benefit conferred upon backward peoples by the spread of civilisation is the White Man’s disease.

The Great War precipitated a problem for which no legislation

could have been adequate. Millions of men were rushed into khaki. Millions of women were rushed into national service. To break up one's home and scatter one's children to the four winds of heaven, was proof of patriotism; and these children, under the strain and stress of the times, became unlike the children of any other generation before or since.

Young men were vouchsafed short leave after living for months with slime and slaughter as their companions on the battlefields. Their natural impulses experienced a sharp and unnatural awakening which the promoters of new and ever nuder revues and the writers of popular songs were quick to turn to commercial account. Young women found themselves suddenly in possession of "freedom," of some measure of economic independence. They also found themselves responsive to the insistent demand "to give the boys on leave a good time."

Dreaming adolescence was caught up in the march of great events which detached it from the past and killed all the promise of its future. So, despite growing knowledge of birth control, the rate of illegitimacy, 39 per thousand births in 1907, leapt to 52 per thousand births in the period 1915-1918.

"All experience shows," declared the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases (1914-1916), "that after a war an excessive incidence of disease is certain to occur." The comparable figures are not available. They must have been affected vitally by, among other influences, the work of courageous writers like Dr. Marie Stopes whose book on "Married Love," published early in 1918, ran into six editions within a year. What is known is that the total number of cases applying at British Treatment Centres was 105,185 in 1920, compared with an average of 53,000 in the years 1925-29, and that Mrs. Pankhurst found in 1921 that "syphilis was raging in Canada." (34)

The experience of the French Authorities suggests that infection was more frequently carried to the Front than acquired there, and that, besides the *maisons tolieres*, the casual street women who "occupied themselves in prostitution for the duration" enjoyed a roaring trade. During the twelve months prior to the outbreak of war 3,201 unregistered women fell into the hands of the Paris police. In 1915 the arrests numbered 3,907, and in 1916, 4,367.

Dr. Jean Lacassagne, explaining in *La Crapouillot* (35) how the French military authorities, faced with the temptations offered to their men by the age-old practice of armies of women following the soldiery close to the firing line, sought to regulate rather than suppress the traffic, alleges that the problem of "distributing" these *femmes-de-joie* was complicated by the fact that where British and American soldiers were stationed the trade was especially lucrative.

"Of course," write Lacassagne, "the troops were warned against listening to the solicitation of the street women; but what were pretty lectures to soldiers returning to the trenches . . ." and he paints a

gruesome picture of queues being controlled with bayonets, of women during periods of pressure receiving 60 to 80 men consecutively, of each succeeding customer timing his predecessor on the amorous couch.

Meantime, among the men on the war fronts a minor medical problem became a major social vice—the practice of homo-sexuality.

This is a vice of which the ordinary British adult is still as ignorant as his great grand-parents were of female prostitution. When Hitler's murder of his perverted friend, Captain Rhoem in 1934, revealed its ravages in post-war Germany, the respectable British Press referred to homo-sexuality mysteriously as "a medieval practice."

True, the statistics of the Army Council give silent denial to any hint that indecency was rampant among British soldiers. From August 4th, 1914, till September 30th, 1919, they reveal only 259 court martials for indecency among the entire Army, white and coloured, of the British Empire. To turn a blind eye to facts, however, is the way of all authority recording the waywardness of all flesh.

Happily, the vice is less widespread in Great Britain than new biographical litterateurs, who regard every sign of unusual genius as a proof of unnatural practices, would have us believe. Yet it exists. Let those who doubt look at Piccadilly where desire and cupidity join forces to mock morality. Let them listen to the type of lewdness which, issuing from the lips of a pretty musical comedy star, passes as humour in 1936. Let them examine the humour black list of the British Broadcasting Corporation. That includes a ban on "references to effminacy among men."

CHAPTER VIII

PREPARING SCANDALS FOR THE NEXT WAR

When a Government contemplates capitulation to Mars, it must manacle the minds of men. In Great Britain, at this moment, the methods adopted between 1914 and 1918 for teaching "the rabble how to babble" are being perfected and applied with increasing cunning.

On October 30th, 1934, the National Conservative Government initiated its first attack on freedom of thought and speech. Its docile majority in Parliament passed an Incitement to Disaffection Bill designed by the Brass Hats to slaughter civil liberty as recklessly as they had sacrificed human life on the fields of Flanders.

By the alteration of one word, this Sedition Bill doubled the power of Authority to send people to prison. It had always been an offence to seduce a soldier from his duty *and* allegiance. To-day it is an offence to seduce a soldier from his duty *or* allegiance. The mother who once pleaded with her soldier son not to bomb civilian populations might be dissuading him from his duty; but since she was not dissuading him also from his allegiance, she could treat him as a human being. As a result of the Sedition Bill, she can hold communion only with a militarised robot, minus a mind to be disaffected, or be clapped into jail.

The Sedition Bill, however, is not aimed primarily at every soldier's mother. It is aimed at every expression of thought which might penetrate the barrack room and influence men still regarded by officers as menials and slaves; and in pursuit of this aim it resurrects the detestable General Search, a weapon wrenched by Radicals from the hands of a tyrannous government as long ago as 1765.

With the consent of a Judge of the High Court a police inspector may break into the home of any citizen suspected of the oriental crime of "harbouring dangerous thoughts." The policeman's task is to discover documents indicating the political beliefs of the householder. If Authority does not endorse those beliefs the householder must prove the unprovable—that neither his thought, speech nor printed word has been communicated to a member of His Majesty's Forces—or face a charge of seducing soldiers from their duty or allegiance. That the police, in an endeavour to justify this legalised housebreaking, might be tempted to "plant" evidence on the private citizen, is clear. Equally clear is the fact that this Sedition Bill can be used to destroy the most fundamental principle of Democracy, the principle that liberty to elect a government implies freedom to oppose it.

The first and most sinister scandal of the next war is in preparation now. There will be no effective opposition to any government engaging in hostilities.

Of all the aspects of the discussion on the Sedition Bill, none was more significant than the attitude of the Press. A few newspapers supported the Bill. A few condemned it. The vast majority entered into a "conspiracy of silence" on a question reaching right to the roots of freedom in a modern State. This same "conspiracy of silence" has continued through a succession of events crying aloud for publicity since 1934.

Constant efforts by the Film Censor to ban the medium of the cinema to mild League of Nations Union propaganda, and the indignation aroused by this interference with freedom, have failed to find any real reflection in the mirror held up by the Press to national life. While, in the last months of 1935, foreign broadcasting stations were telling listeners how the British Fleet was crowding the Mediterranean and threatening Mussolini's lines of communication with Abyssinia, the British Press was silent. High Authority was deciding what news would be vouchsafed the electorate on matters which might have involved it in war.

With messages sent out by British news agencies there was circulated advice on their treatment by editors. For example, to the information made public on September 12th, 1935, that three fresh battalions of troops, drawn from the Lincolnshires, the South Wales Borderers, and the King's Own Scottish Borderers were being moved to Malta, there was this preface:

The War Office, which has supplied the following information, has no objection to its publication, but in the public interest it is desired that undue prominence should not be given to it and that the moves should not be regarded as abnormal. The War

Offices hopes for co-operation of the editors in securing that the matter is not treated in a sensational fashion.

One London newspaper put its duty to the public before the desire of the War Office. It "splashed" the story on its front page and made it the subject of a special bill display. Nothing happened to the editor. High Authority in Great Britain prefers insinuation to assassination. But the bill display, together with evidence of British activity near the scene of conflict, was deleted by the Censor in the American "March of Time" documentary film of the Italian-Abyssinian dispute released in England on May 18th, 1936.

Any charge that British editors are corrupt and that British journalists may be bribed can be dismissed as fantastic. Editors and journalists count as nothing against the proprietors of newspapers which, since they live upon advertisement revenue, have been built firmly into the fabric of the Capitalist State; and the proprietors of such newspapers need no direct bribes to induce them to rally to the defence of Empire. Thus news is featured with due deference to Brass Hats and, frequently, with a reckless disregard of the public interest.⁽³⁶⁾

How then does Press Censorship work?

Between Fleet Street and the Defence Departments there is a liaison organisation presided over by a representative newspaper proprietor and calling itself the Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry, and Press Committee.

Such information as may be gathered by keen journalists—that is, such information as could not be suppressed by newspapers whose first care was news—is circulated by this Committee, invariably with the request that it should not be released to the public. Thus the editor is permitted a comparative "close-up" of the heart of things on condition that he accepts an implied responsibility for keeping his readers in ignorance. Even when descriptions, say of a new type of gun in use on British warships, have been broadcast to foreign newspaper by "spies" or armament makers in search of orders, to publicise the facts in this country may offend against the spirit of this Press-Defence association. For a British newspaper to lend verisimilitude to what the foreigner already knows to be true is to outrage High Authority's belief in its own power to prevent leakage!

This liaison between Fleet Street and Whitehall is not venial. The severest critic must admit that at certain times it might be essential. The point is that it exists, that it is effective, that its personnel must tend to represent exclusive interests, that there is no public oversight of its activities, and that it can be converted into an invincible instrument for suppression of news at the behest of Authority.

At the moment of writing, His Majesty's Government has no occasion for exercising every power it has acquired to defeat opposition to its war aims. The menace to peace does not require the conscription of mind and muscle—yet. It calls only for the conscription of public money, now being poured with increasing generosity into the pockets of Cannon Kings and private financial speculators.⁽³⁷⁾ These

circumstances, however, do not absolve the Government from the task of popularising its £250,000,000 armament programme, and this task has been delegated to the ex-pacifist, ex-socialist, Lord President of the Council. Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald.

On February 25th, 1935, Mr. MacDonald, then Prime Minister, revealed the reason for his painful confession, three weeks earlier, that he knew nothing about the storm of public resentment blowing up over his Government's scandalous Means Test regulations. In answer to a Parliamentary question Mr. MacDonald explained that he had been engaged in important research work. He had been examining Government Departments in order to prove that during the previous ten years armament firms had not sought to influence government policy in relation to National Defence. To enquire what prompted an inconsequential Member of Parliament to ask the question which enabled the Prime Minister to explode his "smoke bomb" would be unkind. Anyway, politicians are notoriously telepathic. It is sufficient that from behind the "smoke screen" Mr. MacDonald issued a White Paper⁽³⁸⁾ (over his own initials, too, the stout fellow!) demanding that Britain should be armed in the cause of peace.

Alas for Mr. MacDonald, the public had long since ceased to imagine that God speaks with a Lossiemouth accent.

Evidence before the American Senate of Inquiry indicating that Cannon Kings (British as well as American) bribe officials and manufacture war scares had already forced a similar inquiry in this country. The National Conservative Government, reluctantly, set up a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Private Manufacture of Armaments,⁽³⁹⁾ and, enthusiastically, refused the Commission those powers to "fish" and probe which would have prevented its proceedings from becoming farcical. Then it was found that even the existence of an Arms Commission which refrained from meeting while the Government was perfecting its re-armament plans did not still the voice of informed suspicion.⁽⁴⁰⁾ With the publication of the unanimous findings of the American Inquiry verifying the gravest of the allegations urged against the Cannon Kings, there was a call for more drastic bedevilment of the public mind. So the National Conservative Government created a new precedent. It permitted Sir Maurice Paschal Alers Hankey, Secretary to the Cabinet, Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, and a Civil Servant, to enter the witness box and express the political opinion of High Authority. On the day before Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister of Defence, announced to Parliament his plans for converting industry to a war production basis, Sir Maurice appeared before the Arms Commission to say:

that Armament firms put ex-army and ex-navy officers on their pay rolls for love of their *beaux yeux* and not because ex-officers "know the ropes"; that there is no evidence of Cannon Kings fomenting war scares: that private enterprise is both cheap and efficient in the manufacture of munitions.

The evidence of Sir Maurice's own colleagues at the Ministry of Munitions during the war is sufficient to confound him; but this Civil

Servant is open to condemnation on other ground.⁽⁴¹⁾ If he was speaking his own opinion, he outraged the tradition and etiquette of the Civil Service. If he was speaking the opinions of the National Conservative Government, his place on the witness stand should have been taken by a representative Minister. He cannot escape the charge that his personal influence and public position were exploited to "salt the ground" to the gold mine which government war preparations are opening for private profiteers.

The final ballyhoo is addressed to Labour. War work, Labour is told, means prosperity. The lie that in the years 1914-1918 Labour left the ranks of the exploited to become exploiters is being told and told again.

In its October 1924 issue, the "Monthly Circular" of the Labour Research Department exploded completely the "rising standard of living" myth fostered by orthodox economists. Relating nominal wages to unemployment and retail prices, the Department showed that from 1900 onwards there had been a steady decline in the working class standard of life and that the decline was most marked in the years 1914-1918.

Here are the figures for certain of the years :

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Year	Normal wages	Unemploy- ment Percentage	Actual wages (Combined a & b)	Retail prices	Real wages
1900	100	2.5	100	100	100
1907	102.1	3.7	100.9	105.0	95.1
1913	106.5	2.1	106.9	114.8	93.1
1914	107.0	3.3	106.1	116.8	90.7
1915	115.0	1.1	116.5	154.1	82.1
1916	125.7	0.4	128.3	188.0	69.9
1917	147.1	0.7	149.7	238.3	62.0
1918	189.9	0.8	193.0	245.3	78.2

The peak of the post-war trade boom in 1921 was the peak also of recovery in wage rates. Then came a plunge into the abyss of unemployment and the final, fifteen years old crisis of British Capitalism from which, whether it chooses war or Fascism, or both, Capitalism can offer no way of escape.

CHAPTER IX THE WAY TO PEACE

War and Fascism or the Social Revolution. These are the plain alternatives before the nation to-day. Great Britain has still to enter the realm of Social Fascism—that realm in which Democracy passes from twilight to darkness and the public meeting place is transformed from a free forum into a concentration camp. But as the Sedition Bill, the increasing stringency of censorship, and the jerrymandering

of the Arms Commission all indicate, the National Conservative Government is making ready for the change, is preparing to challenge any attempt at seizure of power by the working class.

Already every avenue of Economic Fascism has been explored. A ring fence of tariffs has been erected around the Empire. By Orders in Council and with a minimum of parliamentary debate, fiscal barriers have been raised between the natural wealth of overseas producers and the bare larders of home consumers. Subsidies to Big Business (they have exceeded £3,000,000,000 since 1921), have been followed by licences and quotas for farmers, all designed to guarantee high prices and high profits even if 22,000,000 persons—one-half of the population—suffer from semi-starvation. The accepted fact of malnutrition is proof of the failure of the Economic Fascism fashioned in Britain since 1931. So Capitalism is driven to its last desperate expedient, the expedient of war, for in a world economy which denies justice to the masses and destroys the consumers' demand whereby it lives, only armaments provide an expanding market.⁽⁴²⁾

Now, the progress of the privately owned armament industry requires a mass market. It requires the collaboration of Cannon Kings the world over in deciding "spheres of influence." It requires the acceptance by Political Democracy of the doctrine that, although the State must subsidise the production of munitions in peace time, munition makers should be free to sell wherever they please, to potential enemies as well as to friends; should be free indeed, to secure the defence, not of the State, but of their own "dividends from death."

Moreover, apart from the fact that the development of chemical warfare has made every industry a war industry—"there is only one way to disarm a great industrial nation and that is to destroy all of its industries"⁽⁴³⁾—there is everywhere an integral relationship between the international arms makers and Big Business. Skoda, of Czechoslovakia, for example, places investments in Great Britain through the Royal Exchange Assurance Company Limited. Until recently Skoda was a large shareholder in the British sugar-beet industry and enjoyed a share of the £50,000,000 subsidy presented to that industry by the British taxpayer between 1924 and 1934.

Nor is it an accident that with Schneider Creusot, the French arms trust, under the domination of British interests, and the Bank of England exercising more power in the world than any other single institution, the British Government immobilised the League of Nations, shut one eye to German rearmament, and so revived the dying Krupp concern. Without the menace of the producers of "Big Bertha," Britain would be deprived of her strongest argument for rearmament. So the hell's broth of a war which, fought from the air, will massacre the civilian population and send whole continents hurtling back to barbarism, is kept a-boiling to sustain the profit-making system.

Against this evil, war resistance is unavailing. In the conflict of jingo and pacifist, the jingo must win. He holds the Government, the banks, the newspapers and the B.B.C. The extirpation of war calls

for positive action to overthrow Capitalism. That is a task to which the British Democratic Movement must bend its *united* energies and at once; for at the moment when the nation accommodates itself to the conversion of industry from production of the goods and services of joyous living to the manufacture of weapons of destruction, the reformer and revolutionary will be crushed or, crying, "Too late!" commit suicide. For at that moment Social Fascism and the inevitable avalanche of war will be here!

NOTES

- (1) October 17th, 1913.
- (2) *La Croix*, August 15th, 1914.
- (3) The result, says Official Report Cmd. 1193, of raising physical standards.
- (4) Varying accounts of Mr. Bottomley's fees have been given. All accounts agree that the fees varied—and were fat.
- (5) *Clyde Valley Industries during the World War*, Scott and Cunnison (1924).
- (6) This story is told in full in *Proletarian Pilgrimage* by John Paton (pp. 272-273).
- (7) The whole sordid story is revealed in R. S. Baker's *Woodrow Wilson and the World Settlement* (Vol. 1, p. 40).
- (8) Otto Lehmann Russbult's *War for Profit*; also article by same author in *Disarmament*, July 1st, 1932.
- (9) In *Kriegszeit*, published 1909 and quoted by Russbult.
- (10) Quoted in *The War Trusts Exposed*, by J. T. Walton Newbold, 1912.
- (11) Indeed, the *Evening Standard*, owned by Lord Beaverbrook and sympathetic to Mr. Mulliner's version, has attributed the pre-War naval race to building by Britain, in 1905, of the 17,950 tons *Dreadnought* — the British ship which rendered the *German Navy* obsolete. (*Evening Standard*, February 10th, 1936.)
- (12) These figures are from *Four and a Half Years*, by Dr. Christopher Addison, former Minister of Munitions, pages 94 and 95. See also the same author's *Practical Socialism*, Volume 1.
- (13) Quoted by the Rt. Hon. Thomas Johnston in *Reynolds's Illustrated News*, March 12th, 1933.
- (14) The figures do not include casualties amongst Anzacs.
- (15) The late Lord Jellicoe, *Daily Herald*, October 11th, 1930. (Quoted *Labour and Steel*, by Horace B. Davis.)
- (16) The figures, and those that follow, are quoted from *The Triumph of Unarmed Forces*, by Rear-Admiral M. W. W. P. Consett, C.M.S., Naval Attache in Scandinavia, 1912-1919.
- (17) *The Times*, April 4th, 1919, quoted Consett.
- (18) Speaking in the House of Commons, August 18th, 1919.
- (19) *Practical Socialism*, Vol. 1, chapter iv.
- (20) Report of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry (1921), Vol. 1, p. 215.
- (21) Author's brackets.
- (22) *The Waste of Capitalism*, p.p. 19-20, published by the Labour Party, 1924.
- (23) *Labour and Capital in the Engineering Trades*, 1922, Labour Publishing Company, Limited.
- (24) *Labour and National Finance* (p. 27.)
- (25) *Problem of Finance and Government* (p. 242.)
- (26) Professor F. Soddy in *Money versus Man* (p. 95.)
- (27) Evidence before the Royal Commission on the Private Manufacture and Trading in Arms given by Admiral R. H. S. Bacon, October 31st, 1935.
- (28) A most able review to which the present writer is deeply indebted.
- (29) *Northcliffe—an Autobiography*, by Hamilton Fyfe, p. 175.
- (30) *Robert Donald*, by H. A. Taylor, page 136.
- (31) *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, January, 1935.

- (32) This subject is dealt with very ably in *Towards Sex Freedom* by Irene Clephane.
- (33) Quoted by Dr. L. Martindale in *Under the Surface*.
- (34) Dame Ethel Smyth's memoirs, quoted in *Towards Sex Freedom*.
- (35) Special November, 1935, edition.
- (36) Students of the technique of war propaganda will recall that H.M.S. Audacious was sunk by a German submarine off North Ireland in sight of an Atlantic liner—news, obviously, which could not be prevented from circulating. Scores of pictures were taken. They were printed in America, in Germany, and all over the Continent. They found their way into British newspaper offices. But neither the pictures nor news were published here. (See Hannen Swaffer, "World's Press News," May 14, 1936.)
- (37) Stock Exchange valuations of armament shares rocketed between the issue of Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald's White Paper on March 4, 1935, and the issue of the Government White Paper of March 5th, 1936. In that twelve months, on a conservative estimate, the increase was £250,000,000.
- (38) March 4th, 1935.
- (39) February 18th, 1935.
- (40) The Commission enjoyed a three-months' holiday from February 8th, 1936, then met only because of the pointed expression of certain sections of the Press.
- (41) "Vickers," wrote Dr. Christopher Addison, in "Four and a Half Years" (pp. 98-99), "evidently are anxious lest . . . they may get into our bad books. I could see also that they were influenced by the fact that Girouard (Sir Percy Girouard) and West (the late Sir Glyn West) are from Armstrongs . . ."
- (42) As I write, the National Conservative Government has decided that League of Nations Sanctions, despite their tardy application, might bring down Mussolini and prevent his conquest of Abyssinia. One need not recall the Imperialist intrigues—including the Hoare-Laval Pact of December 1936—into which the Government entered, to realise that the fear of the Government is not that the fifty nations actively supporting the League might fail, but that they might succeed. Immediately a League comprising Soviet Russia and a France led by the "Popular Front" proves itself capable of securing the territorial integrity of Abyssinia, it becomes capable of demanding economic justice, say for Egypt, and of pursuing a policy of world pacification on the basis of social justice. That presages the end of Imperialism and, especially, the end of British Imperialism. So Great Britain withdraws from positive League action, piles up armaments to defend its shores against attack (although these shores have never been attacked in any one of the 150 wars fought by Imperial Governments) and prepares for its next war of intervention on behalf of invested capital.
- (43) "The Present State of Germany," by General J. H. Morgan (1924).

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